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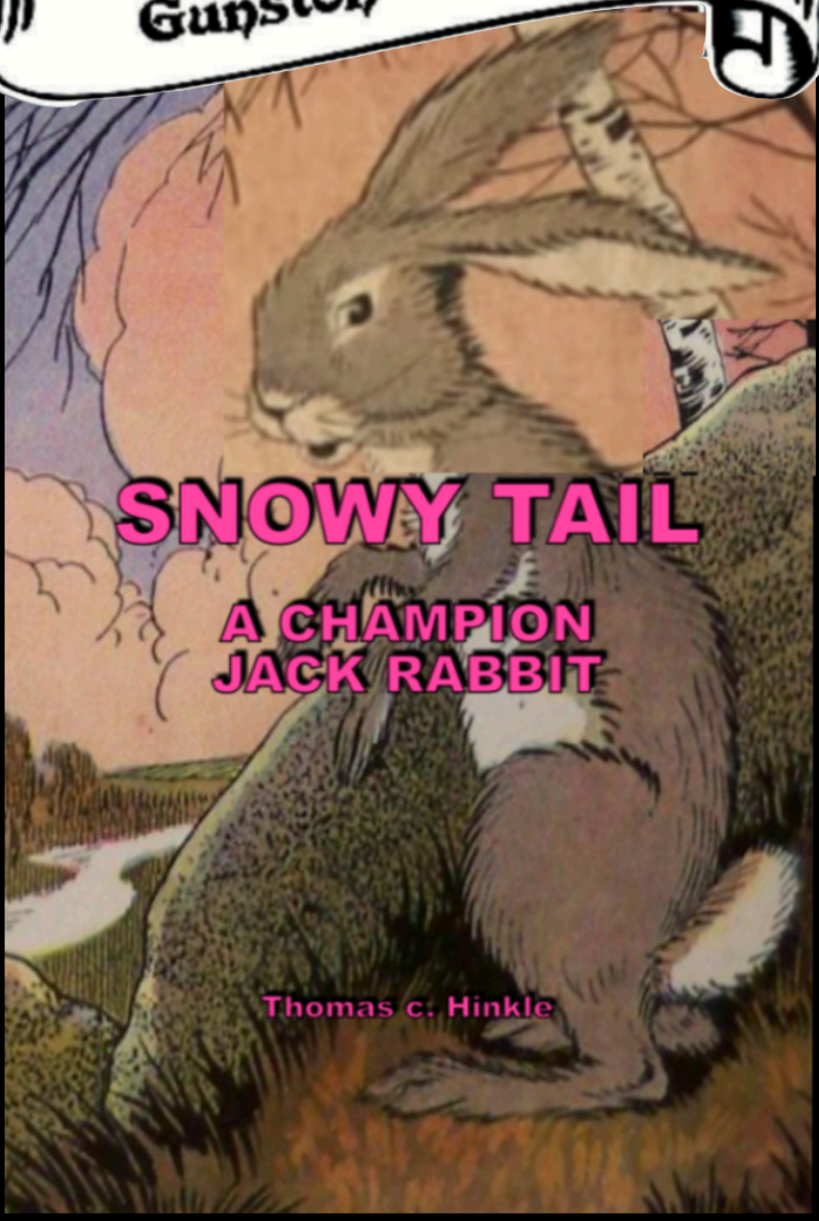

SNOWY TAIL

A CHAMPION JACK RABBIT

Thomas c. Hinkle

Gunston & The Book Bunnies

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Gunston Classics

SNOWY TAIL

A CHAMPION JACK RABBIT

By Thomas C. Hinkle

Milo Winter - Illustrator

Second Edition

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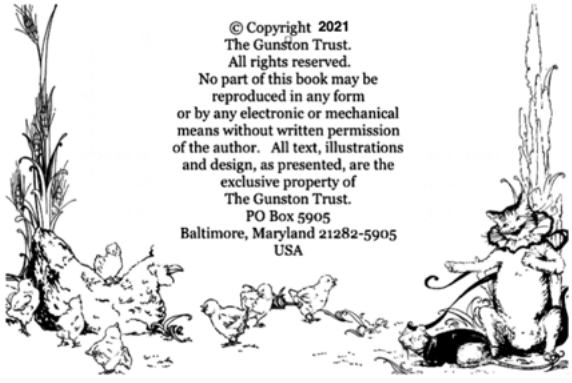

"Now you sit just as still as can be"

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- SNOWYTAIL -
A CHAMPION JACK RABBIT

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SNOWY TAIL

SNOWY TAIL ALONE IN THE HOME NEST

It was a fine May morning in the Republican River Valley of Kansas. The sun had just peeped over the hills and was shining on a green hillside that sparkled with the dewdrops on thousands of grassy stems.

Not far below, the river flowed peacefully along murmuring to the many willows that seemed leaning over to listen to its song.

Had you looked up on the green hillside you would not have seen

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any sign of life; but it was there—yes, right there where the dewdrops sparkled brightest on the waving green grass. There, snugly hidden in a nest, his bright round eyes looking down toward the river, was a little roly-poly rabbit.

But he was not a cottontail rabbit. No indeed! If you knew anything at all about rabbits you would have known at once that this very tiny fellow was a jack rabbit. His little big ears, although he kept them flat to his head, said as plain as could be, "I'm a real jack rabbit. I'm a very little one, to be sure, but I'm a real one. If I'd happen to run from something you'd soon see"!

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Now there was one thing about Snowy Tail that was very different from the everyday Kansas jack rabbit. He had a SNOW WHITE TAIL, while most other Kansas jack rabbits had tails the upper sides of which were black. But had you been standing right above Snowy Tail you could n't have told what his tail was like, because he was sitting on it.

He was sitting very, very still, almost, but not quite as still as a statue, for his little nose was wobbling ever so fast.

Snowy Tail was alone in the home nest. Once there had been a big family in the nest, but now there was only Mammy White

Tail and Snowy Tail. Only the night before old Ki-yi Coyote's brother Crafty had come creeping down the hillside. The wind, blowing gently from the valley up the hill, told him that there were rabbits near by. Poor Mammy White Tail did all she could. She stayed right with her little rabbits, but at last she told them all to run and started off herself. But only Mammy and Snowy Tail got away. Snowy was larger and stronger than his little brother and sister rabbits and he got away so quickly old Crafty Coyote never saw him.

Quite early this morning Mammy White Tail had said to

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Snowy Tail, "Now you sit just as still as still can be in the nest. I must find a new home. Sooner or later that sneaking coyote is sure to come back and find us. You are the only one I have now and you must be as careful as you can. Sit still. Don't move a bit of you except your nose. You may always wobble that as much as you like. I shall come back soon."

And that's why Snowy Tail sat so still and looked down the grassy hillside. But he was growing restless. To be sure he wobbled his nose; that helped a little.

My, but how he wished Mammy White Tail would hurry!

SNOWY TAIL'S NARROW ESCAPE

Snowy Tail waited quietly. The broad grass blades about the nest hid him completely but in front was a little opening through which he could peep out.

He saw a great big bumblebee drinking nectar from the cup of a yellow toadflax flower. Snowy Tail watched the bee as it buzzed from one yellow flower to another and for a moment forgot his absent mother. All of a sudden he quit wobbling his nose and sat up. He had heard a noise on the hillside above him.

Standing on his little hind legs he peeped through the waving grass behind the nest.

Down the hill not far away came a coyote. It was Ki-yi's brother. He was moving slowly, sniffing the grass as he came on. Now and then he raised his head high and looked quickly in every direction. He was hunting for any small animal that might show itself, but his manner said plainly, "I smell rabbits."

As Snowy Tail watched, his heart beat—oh—so fast! Well he knew what old Crafty Coyote was searching for and he could see that he was headed straight down the hillside toward the nest.

Suddenly as Crafty slipped sneakingly along he sprang aside and seized a big grasshopper. A grasshopper, although small, is always a choice tidbit for a coyote. Down went the grasshopper at one gulp, followed by a cricket that had been a bit too late in getting under a stone. But the grasshopper and the cricket only made Crafty want more. He looked carefully around and saw a wee mouse run squeaking toward his hole. In two jumps Crafty was upon him. He licked his white teeth and grinned broadly at his good luck. But Crafty Coyote was looking for larger and juicier game. There

was not the least doubt about that. His wide-awake manner showed he was looking for something better but more difficult to catch than grasshoppers and mice.

Nearer and nearer he came to the nest, but the wind was blowing toward it so he did not smell Snowy Tail.

The poor little rabbit was desperate. Why was n't Mammy White Tail there! Here came that dreadful coyote with the green eyes, big white teeth, and huge body. And there was no one around to care for Snowy Tail. What SHOULD he do!

Crafty Coyote was almost at the nest, and so Snowy Tail did

the only thing he COULD do to save himself. He ran.

Yes, he ran, and such running! Like a flash he was out of the nest and away! His legs were wonderful for speed and he used them with all his might. He darted out of the nest and around a big bowlder so quickly that even as spry an enemy as Crafty could not keep up with him. In two leaps Crafty was behind the bowlder, but no Snowy Tail was there. He had dodged round another big bowlder just in time, and now away he went zigzagging and doubling so that he kept just a few inches from Crafty's nose. Then with a lightning-like

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zigzag and a double he gained a little, and slipping through some tall grass dropped into the dry bed of a little run on the hillside where there had been a tiny waterfall. Snowy Tail, huddled back as far as possible in the soft dirt, kept just out of sight in the small pocket. He could hear old Crafty jumping and thrashing frantically about in the tall grass above in search of him, but Snowy Tail lay low.

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SNOWY TAIL FORGETS HIS TROUBLES

Snowy Tail got as far back as he could in the little pocket and waited. And if he trembled a little, he certainly had reason to. Once or twice in a high jump old Crafty came so near that little pieces of stone and dirt were knocked off the tiny ledge and fell on the little whitetail. But Snowy did n't move an ear nor even wobble his nose.

By and by the noise died away and Snowy Tail dared peep out. He saw old Crafty far down the hillside making toward the river.

He saw old Crafty far down the hillside

This was a glad surprise and made Snowy Tail feel safe again. He slipped out of the little pocket and hopping back around the big bowlders soon came to the nest where his mother had left him. From here he looked out again and saw the last of old Crafty Coyote as he pushed in among some sumac bushes and disappeared. Of course, he might come sneaking back up the hillside any minute, so Snowy Tail was very impatient for Mammy to come. He was hungry, too. The grass around the nest was much too coarse and tough for food. He believed it would now be quite safe to hop out and get

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some of the tender grass he could see growing around one of the larger rocks. So he crept out of the nest and looked about him and listened. He stood upon his hind legs and peered about, but the only thing he saw or heard was a bumblebee drowsily buzzing from one flower to another.

Snowy Tail ate grass until he was no longer hungry. Then he was so happy he played hide and seek with himself around the biggest bowlder. He forgot all about Mammy White Tail and Crafty Coyote. It was very easy for Snowy Tail to forget his troubles. As he ran around the big rock he did n't keep his little big ears

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straight up. Oh, no! He kept them flat to his shoulders. He was doing just as he saw Mammy do when a coyote was pressing hard on her heels. Soft light gray was all that could be seen of him as he ran with his ears flat to his shoulders.

All at once he stopped his play and looked toward the deep woods down along the river. Yes, surely he saw something moving down there. He looked again, hoping it was Mammy White Tail coming back. Why did n't she hurry anyway? Come to think cf it, it was hard to wait alone on the hillside without her.

But something told Snowy Tail it was n't Mammy White Tail in the tall grass near the woods. He looked closer and just then a big lumbering trailhound burst into sight. His nose was close to the ground. He was running this way, then that, and sniffing, sniffing, as he ran. He was trailing some animal and did n't find it an easy task to keep the trail in the tall grass. Now, really, it was a cold trail of Mammy White Tail. Slowly and surely, sniffing and sniffing, the hound came up the hill toward the nest.

SNOWY FREES MAMMY WHITE TAIL

Sniff, sniff, sniff, on he came. Nearer and nearer he sniffed his way to the nest into which Snowy Tail had crept.

Little Snowy Tail sat as still as a wee field mousie and kept his bright black eyes on the big, lumbering hound. He waited as long as he dared. But now the dog was so close Snowy knew he must run or it would be too late.

So he darted out of the nest toward the biggest bowlder just as he had done when Crafty Coyote chased him.

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With a startled roar the big hound came after him. But the big trailhound was n't half as swift as Crafty Coyote and so Snowy Tail easily got away. Snowy ran quickly into a thick bunch of grass. There he sat and slyly peeped out.

The hound came sniffing along the trail. Since he had been able to get away when the hound was almost upon him, Snowy Tail decided to take a good start and run at once. He was tired of staying home alone anyway. So away he ran down the hill toward the woods along the river where he had last seen his mother. Now, much to his sur-

prise, he did n't hear the roar of the big hound. He heard only the swish, swish of the grass as he ran swiftly through it down the hillside. Snowy Tail did n't know that a trailhound never sees an animal he is trailing unless it springs right up under his nose. A hound is always so busy smelling the ground he never takes time to look about.

Snowy Tail ran helter-skelter like a rush of wind in a wild storm until he came to the edge of the woods. The hound was still nosing patiently along the trail on the hillside. It would be easy to outdistance him now. So Snowy Tail pricked up his

The big hound came after him

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long ears and went hopping, hopping away into the woods.

There was so much to see and to wonder about in the woods that for a moment he forgot all about Mammy White Tail. But suddenly Snowy was all aquiver with fear for he heard her voice crying from a thicket. She was calling for help.

With one leap and a bound Snowy Tail was at the thicket, which was overgrown with briers. There he saw his mother.

"Snowy! Snowy!" she cried. "Come and cut off some briers so I can get out!"

Well, that was certainly a queer scrape. Snowy Tail did n't

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stop to ask how it happened. He just laid his big little ears flat to his shoulders and started in to help Mammy. He had to cut a good many briers to get to her, but that was easily done and soon he was beside his mother.

Then he set busily to work with his sharp little teeth cutting the briers that held her fast. In a little time the last one broke with a snap and Mammy stood up free. She had lost some fur, to be sure, but that was a small matter—she was free.

"Gracious, Snowy!" she exclaimed. "I've had such a fright. I was just coming for you when old Crafty Coyote sprang out of

the grass at me. He was so near I had no time to get a start; so I sprang into the woods and ran for my life. I did n't have time to pick my way and so I ran right into this brier patch. But anyway, I got in so far he could n't reach me and I'm not hurt. I got away; that's enough for me. And now we'll just slip away to the nest I've made. You must keep your eyes and ears wide open. I see that foolish hound still sniffing round our old nest on the hillside, and we never know when Crafty Coyote might come back."

And away Mammy White Tail hopped with Snowy Tail follow-

ing. Snowy was sure they should run much faster than Mammy was going, not because he was afraid but because he felt so much like running. But he stayed dutifully at Mammy's heels and watched and listened just as she had told him to do.

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MAMMY PLAYS A TRICK ON OLD JORDAN'S HOUNDS

Mammy White Tail ran a little way along the edge of the woods with Snowy Tail following very close behind. Snowy kept his round black eyes wide open and was ready, always ready, to run like lightning if Crafty Coyote came after them.

On and on went Mammy White Tail until finally she turned off across the prairie toward Hickory Hollow ravine. Snowy Tail did not ask any questions. He just followed.

All went well until they neared Hickory Hollow. Then suddenly around the bend of the ravine they saw old Jordan with his two greyhounds. Instantly Mammy White Tail stopped and crouched close to the ground. Her great ears lay flat to her shoulders, and with nothing but the gray of her back showing it was not easy to see her.

Snowy Tail wasn't told what to do; he knew. He did what Mammy did. Right behind her he crouched, his little big ears flat to his shoulders.

On came old Jordan and his two big hounds. It was a bad moment for the two rabbits and

bad indeed for Snowy Tail, for what greyhound ever had mercy on rabbits, even little ones!

But Mammy White Tail knew what to do. "Don't move!" she called to Snowy Tail. Then up she sprang, her long ears standing straight up. She didn't hurry but ran easily toward another bend of the ravine a little farther down, where her course led directly TOWARD the hounds!

"Hi! Yi! Yi!" Old Jordan yelled loudly for fear his hounds might not see. "There's that whitetail again!" he shouted. The hounds saw and raced away like blue-gray streaks, old Jordan following as fast as he could.

Now when running from an enemy she fears, Mammy White Tail does not hold her ears straight up for very long. So in a moment down went the big ears flat to her shoulders and she was off like the wind, and no hound that ever lived could catch her. Her blacktail cousins do differently, but Mammy, the mother of Snowy Tail, was a whitetail.

Mammy knew just what she was going to do when she began to run. She turned at the ravine and ran along the long shelving bank until she came to a sharp point. There the hill to the right jutted out so there

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was just room enough for her to pass between it and the steep side of the Hollow.

So very narrow was the pass Mammy knocked off loose pieces of dirt and little stones which rolled over the edge and down, down plump to the bottom of the deep ravine.

But Mammy was not yet running her best. On and on, neck and neck, came the two hounds. They saw nothing but a great whitetail ahead of them—only a little way ahead! They would scarcely have seen a wire fence in a similar run. So they paid not the least bit of heed to the narrow pass but came on and

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into it like a rush of wind. The blue hound, next to the hill, fell against the brindle one and both rolled to the bottom of the Hollow baying and yelping loudly.

Then Mammy White Tail circled up over the hill and came back to Snowy Tail. She was quivery all over but felt splendid, and she smiled approvingly on dutiful little Snowy Tail who hadn't even wobbled his nose.

"Where are those hounds?" he asked.

"They are probably picking themselves up from the bottom of the ravine," Mammy said. "Anyway, they must have hit the bottom. But we'll not wait

to see. Come! Let's go to the new nest."

And away hopped Mammy with Snowy Tail following her. On and on Mammy went until they came to another hill. Here Snowy Tail saw a great many huge round rocks scattered over the hillside. He was glad, because he knew they'd offer him a splendid chance to get away from enemies. Mammy knew he might need these big bowlders any minute.

SNOWY THINKS THE BIG WORLD QUEER

Mammy White Tail led Snowy Tail to the snuggest of snug nests. It was in a bunch of dense grass and was large enough for both of them. A spreading green sumac grew just back of it.

"Now," said Mammy, "we can sit here and see out on every side of us. And old Coyote lives so far from here it's not likely he'll find us. But we must not forget to watch out for him."

Suddenly Mammy White Tail reached down and rubbed Snowy Tail's little nose with her nose,

to show her love for him, and said, "I'm proud of you, Snowy. You're a fine little son and you're fast learning to take care of yourself." Then Mammy White Tail rubbed his nose a little longer than usual. Perhaps Snowy Tail did not know the reason why. And yet he may have suspected the truth. You see, Mammy was bestowing more than usual love on him because she was thinking of all his little lost brothers and sisters. But Mammy White Tail was true and brave. She still had Snowy Tail, and she meant to keep him.

"There's a lot of tender grass around here," Mammy White

Tail said, "and the more you eat the bigger you'll grow and the faster you can run. But I nearly forgot to tell you where the spring is. Come! Let's go for a drink."

And off Mammy hopped over the green hillside with Snowy Tail at her side.

They soon came to a little spring where the water trickled out of the hillside and fell into a rocky basin, making a tiny pool as clear as crystal.

The sun shone brightly on the glassy surface. When Snowy Tail reached his nose down for a drink he jerked back quickly.

"What's the matter?" asked

Mammy, smiling as she looked up at him.

"Nothing, only a little rabbit in the water. It frightened me at first," Snowy Tail explained. The big world was so very queer, but the next time he looked into the spring he was n't a bit surprised. He knew now that when he drank from the pool he'd always see a little jack rabbit with big ears in the water, and when Mammy drank, if he looked over her shoulder, he'd always see a big rabbit just like her in the crystal pool.

SNOWY TAIL BREAKS HIS PROMISE

When Mammy White Tail makes a nest she likes to know all about everything around it. She believed she had chosen a good place but she wished to make sure of it. "Stay right in the nest," she told Snowy Tail, "unless something frightens you. Then use your legs just as you did before." And away she hopped to the top of the hill she wished to explore.

Snowy Tail promised with a flap of one ear and sat very still and very close to the ground.

Of course he wobbled his nose. That was always quite right. He found it a pleasant pastime.

For a long time Snowy Tail waited. Then he began to grow restless and stood up on his hind feet to peer through the dense grass above the nest. The sun shone soft and warm. Nothing alive was to be seen except harmless grasshoppers and here and there a bumblebee. It was almost impossible to sit there and do nothing but wobble his nose. Anyway, although Snowy Tail had had two great adventures and was still dreadfully afraid of old Crafty Coyote and the trailhound, he was eager for a new one.

"It's easy to get away from a foolish trailhound," he thought, "and I can see Jordan's hounds or Crafty from here just as easy as Mammy can. I can make sure, too, of seeing them first, just as she does. So I don't see why I need stay here all the time. I'll just slip out of the nest and look around a bit."

Snowy Tail crept out cautiously and looked around. A grasshopper sprang up under his nose and made him jump, but no danger was in sight. He hopped on over to the little spring and listened to the music of the tiny waterfall. It was a pleasing sound and he crept up to the

little pool to take a drink. As he reached down he saw another little big-eared jack rabbit just like himself in the clear water. But that didn't bother him now. He just thought it great fun. He looked curiously down at the other jack rabbit's funny little nose and black eyes. Some crickets and beetles had hurried away as he came up, but he saw nothing to be afraid of. He looked down the hillside and across the valley. There was no sign of life down there except some crows cawing in a scrub oak at the bottom of the hill.

Snowy Tail felt so fine he kicked up his heels and ran

M·W·
He saw another little jack rabbit

once around the spring. Then he thumped the ground with his hind feet. It was his first thump and he astonished himself. It was a surprisingly loud thump for so small a rabbit.

He looked up the hillside and wondered why Mammy White Tail did not come back. He wondered, too, why she had gone up the hill. Mammy didn't always tell him why she was going away.

SNOWY TAIL ATTENDS A SURPRISE PARTY

The nest Mammy White Tail made at the edge of the woods was now Snowy Tail's home.

Of course he'd be glad when the time finally came to go out into the valley and live wherever he chose, but that good time had n't come yet.

The new nest was in dense meadow grass where some small bushes grew — just the right place for a jack rabbit nest. It was a lovely hiding place and Snowy Tail was delighted with it. But before he 'd been in it long he

began to grow restless, just as all jack rabbits do when growing rapidly. Even Mammy never stayed long in the nest at one time. She would sit in it for a little while with dreamy, half-closed eyes and then she'd tell Snowy Tail to stay right at home for she'd soon be back.

Now Snowy Tail could n't see why he, too, should n't go out and look around a bit. This place down by the woods was so very, very interesting that he was out and looking around before he knew it. At first all went well and it seemed as if nothing could happen. Then all at once he heard a rustling in the grass

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and out glided a big rattlesnake. It was crawling along the edge of the woods as Snowy Tail peeped around a tree. He was sure he could run away from it.

By and by the rattler stopped quickly, crept back, and hid under a wild gooseberry bush.

Plunk! plunk! plunk! There came a green frog jumping along the way to a marsh a bit farther on. The green frog didn't usually wander so far and was putting in his best jumps to get back home. No doubt the snake had heard him as he came down PLUNK, PLUNK! on the ground.

Another jump and the frog would be in the grass, then two

or three more and KERCHUG! he would land safe in the marsh. But between the grass and the marsh was the big rattler.

Snowy Tail stood still with fright. He could n't make a sound. He looked at the little green frog, then at the big rattler all coiled and waiting to spring.

Yes, he was all ready to spring when the little green frog should jump again.

But just then Snowy Tail heard a rustle and there, standing behind a tree, he saw Crafty Coyote. Crafty's head was turned to one side, and one ear was cocked up as he watched the oncoming froggie. He was waiting

until froggie jumped out into the open space near the gooseberry bush where he could pounce upon him.

The rattler did n't know Crafty was there. And neither did Crafty know anything about the big rattler under the gooseberry bush. So all of a sudden there were three very much surprised animals, but the one most surprised was the frog

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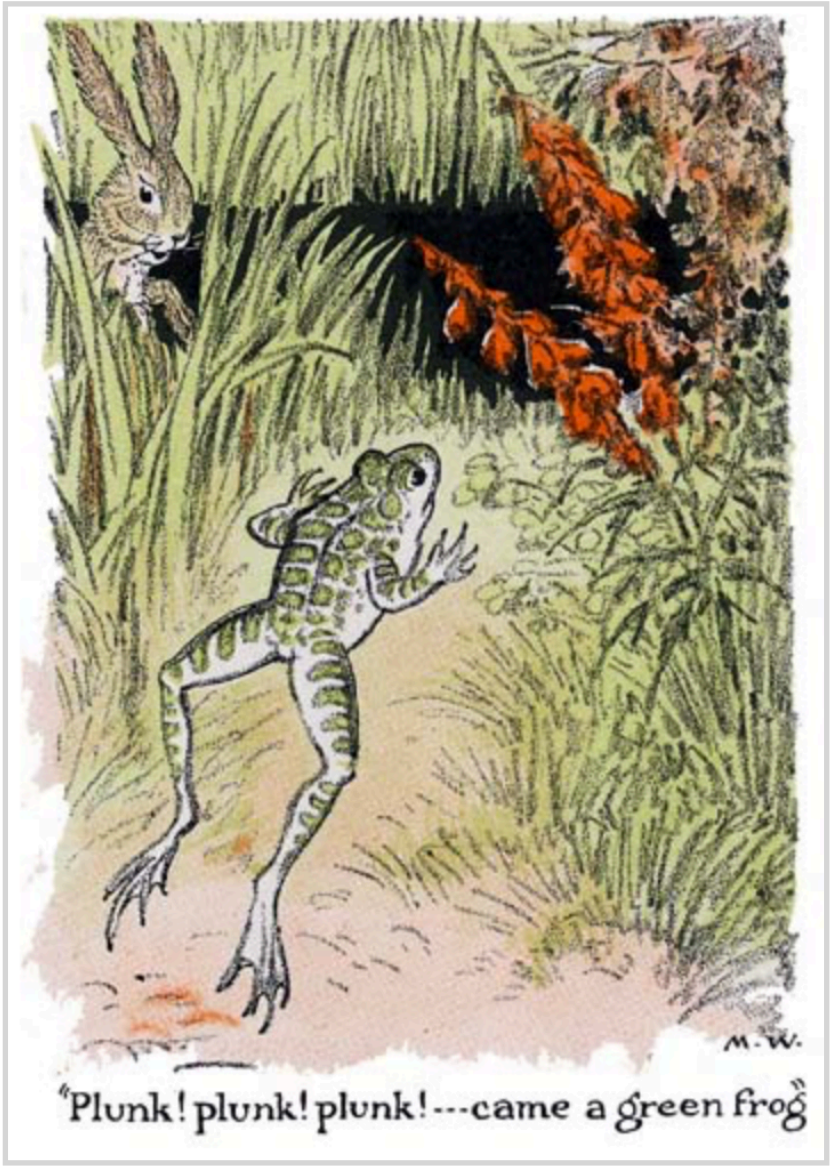
HOW THE PARTY BROKE UP

Plunk! into the open space hopped unsuspecting froggie, no doubt delighted to be getting so near the friendly water of his beloved marsh. But the moment he landed, out sprang two enemies —the big rattler and Crafty Coyote.

It was a dreadful moment in froggie's life, but two enemies really proved to be much better than one. The rattlesnake was so surprised at seeing Crafty he missed the frog, and Crafty was so frightened at seeing the un-



"Plunk! plunk! plunk!---came a green frog"

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looked-for rattler he, too, missed him. So while his enemies stopped dead still, froggie took three tremendous leaps, splashed into the friendly water and disappeared.

Crafty was scared and startled, but only for a moment. A coyote thinks as quick as lightning, for he must. So no doubt Crafty thought, "Now here's a terrible old rattlesnake. He jumped for the frog or he jumped for me. But that's no matter. He didn't get me but he made me miss the frog, and a fine tidbit it was. If he had been able, this old rattler would have bit me and made an end of me. But he

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missed me and here he is stretched out — not coiled ready to spring. Well, I'll not give him time to coil. I'll just finish him in about half a dozen shakes while he's so handy." Then in a flash, before the rattler had time to spring, Crafty seized him by the middle and holding him high up in the air shook him flippity! flippity! flippity! flap! He shook him so fast you couldn't have told it was a rattler.

"There!" thought Crafty, as he threw the limp rattler away. "There now, old fellow, you're done for! You'll never bite anybody again. My, but I'm

sorry I lost that frog! He was such a splendid, fat one. Now I'll just slip over and hide in the grass beside the marsh. Perhaps he'll be silly enough to hop out again."

Snowy Tail, who had seen all that had happened, crept quietly back to his nest

If wild animals could tell about these woodland and prairie battles, what capital stories they would spin! Snowy Tail wasn't at all sorry Crafty had killed the rattler but now he wished very much Crafty himself would go away. Just then he heard a noise and saw Crafty leap out of the grass and seize a foolish

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frog that had jumped up out of the mud at the edge of the marsh.

Then with the frog in his mouth, its limp legs "dangling down-O!" Crafty DID go away. He trotted along in the woods a little way, then turned quickly and loped up the hill. About halfway up he suddenly stood still. Snowy Tail saw another coyote come out of a hole in the hillside. Crafty dropped the frog. The other coyote at once picked it up and disappeared in the hole.

Two coyotes and a hole in the hill! This meant a den and baby coyotes

SNOWY TAIL GROWS UP FAST

"Well," exclaimed Mammy White Tail. Snowy Tail turned round and there she was right behind the nest. She frightened him so he nearly jumped out of his skin. But it was only for a moment. As Mammy came around in front of the nest she said, "I was just coming home when I saw you hiding behind the tree. I saw the snake and the frog and old Crafty, and I could n't do a thing to help you. How I wished you were safe in the nest! Anyway, I'm glad

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there's one more snake done for. But what bothers me now is what I saw on the hillside. Did you see, Snowy?"

"Yes," said Snowy Tail, "there must be two coyotes instead of one living around here."

"That's true," said Mammy, "and instead of getting away from Crafty we have made our new home right beside him. And what's worse, there must be some baby coyotes in the den. And old Crafty and Mother Crafty are on the lookout day and night to catch folks like you and me for baby food. That means you've got to watch every minute," said Mammy

"But I'm getting bigger and stronger every day," said Snowy Tail. "Every morning I can run a little faster than the day before. I can take care of myself," he said, boastfully.

"This is just the time for you to be careful," said Mammy. She knew a little fellow like Snowy would take chances on doing things no grown-up jack rabbit would even think of. New-found quickness and speed and strength in a young jack rabbit often cost him his life.

But Snowy Tail certainly was growing up fast. At the end of each week he seemed twice as big as the week before. He was

far quicker, speedier, and stronger already than any ordinary black-tail at his age. There was not the least doubt about it. Mammy was glad, for almost always it's the strength and speed of a jack rabbit that saves him his life if an enemy finds him.

"Won't it be splendid when I can run as fast as you, Mammy?" Snowy Tail said. "Some day we'll try a real race!"

"That will come soon enough," said Mammy, "for every jack rabbit must run races for his life. The older we get the less we like them. But I'm sure you can take care of yourself when your time comes." Mammy

looked admiringly on Snowy Tail's light gray fur. It was much lighter than a young blacktail's fur and much lighter in color than the usual young whitetail. And as Snowy Tail grew this difference in color made him a marked rabbit all through the valley.

One day Mammy said to Snowy Tail, "Snowy, I want you to be the speediest rabbit that ever lived in this valley, and I believe you will."

"I know I shall," Snowy Tail said, and he began to double and zigzag over the prairie after the fashion of young jack rabbits, but much faster.

THE END

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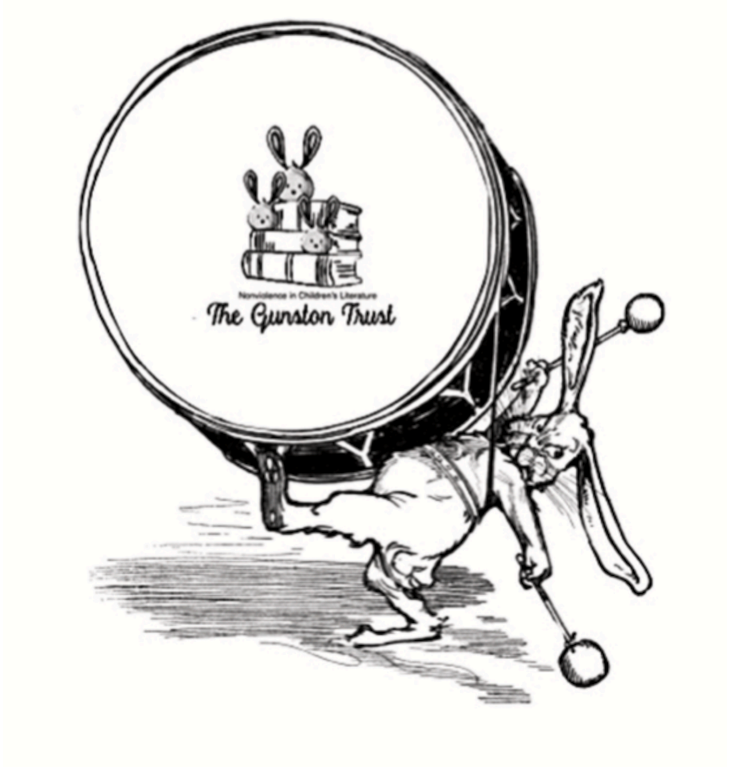
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